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*Fifth Step : Special Treatment of the Psalms.*

Upon this or a similar model, take up and work out, so far as your time will allow, other Psalms of this period, e. g., 52 ; 142.

*Sixth Step : Expressions referring to Uprightness, Perfection.*

1. Examine Ps. 7:3-5 ; 17:3 ; 18:20-22 ; 19:13, etc., and note expressions which seem to exhibit a self-righteous spirit.
2. Compare, on the other hand, such expressions of an opposite character as are found in Ps. 51.
3. Explain the sense in which the first class of passages is to be taken.\*

## STUDY XV.—DAVID'S PSALMS—SECOND PERIOD.

**Remarks:** 1. The work of the Bible-student is two-fold :—(1) *To transfer himself* to the times and circumstances in which a given passage was first written ; *to study the passage* in the light of these times and circumstances, and *discover*, from this study, the underlying *principles* which it illustrates and teaches. (2) *To apply these principles* to himself, his own times, his own circumstances. We may, for convenience, term the first part of the work *study*, the second *application*.

2. We may divide all Bible-students into three classes :—(1) Those who study, but do not apply ; (2) Those who apply, but do not study ; (3) Those who study and apply.
3. There are many good men who become so engrossed in the first part of the work, the critical study, that they lose sight of the end for which they took it up. This class is a select one, including many of the world's greatest scholars.
4. A large number of Bible-students spend all their time in applying—*what?* Their own ideas and conceits, their own fancies and errors ; for they have not *studied*. They have actually forgotten that, in the work of application, one must have *something* to apply. Could any thing be more absurd? It is this mistake that is proving fatal in the case of a considerable proportion of Sunday-school Bible-work, namely, too much application, too little material to apply.
5. The *ideal* Bible-student is one who both studies and applies. This class needs to be increased. Who that is not now a member will join it?

*First Step : Psalms referring to the Removal of the Ark.*

Read carefully the Psalms supposed to refer of the removal of the ark to Jerusalem, viz. : 15 ; 24 ; 30 ; 101 (comparing, perhaps, 68 ; 132), and make notes under the following heads :

1. Circumstances under which they seem to have been written (see superscriptions).
2. Expressions which they have in common.
3. Phases of character or feeling to which they give utterance.
4. Expressions indicating the writer's ideas of God, of God's relations to man, of man's relations to God.
5. Expressions which might seem to oppose the alleged circumstances under which the Psalm was written.

\* See Perowne's Commentary on the Psalms, I, pp. 59, 61, and other commentaries *in loc*.

*Second Step : Psalms referring to David's Wars.*

Read those Psalms which, perhaps, may have been written during his wars, viz., 2(?) ; 20 ; 21 ; 60(?) ; 110, and make notes under the heads given above.

*Third Step : Special treatment of Pss. 20, 21.*

Treat Pss. 20 and 21 according to the outline given of Ps. 56, in the tenth "study," considering in order (1) the special expressions which need explanation, (2) the parallelism of each verse, (3) the meaning of each individual verse, (4) the logical connection existing between the several verses, (5) the theme and analysis of the Psalm, (6) the superscription in its relation to the contents, (7) the contents in view of the Davidic authorship, (8) the important teachings of the Psalms.

*Fourth Step : Special treatment of Pss. 51, 32.*

Read Pss. 51 and 32 in connection with the story of David's sin (2 Sam. 11 ; 12), and make notes under the following heads:

1. The circumstances under which these Psalms were written : (a) Ps. 51, immediately upon his coming to realize the enormity of his sin ; (b) Ps. 32, "a review of his experience somewhat later, in which he dwells upon the blessedness of forgiveness obtained, and describes the misery he had suffered while his sin was still unconfessed and unrepented of."
2. The expressions contained in each which relate (a) to the character of the sin ; (b) to his appreciation of his sinfulness ; (c) to his desire to be forgiven ; (d) to God's attitude towards sinners.
3. The support given by the contents of these Psalms to the statement of the superscriptions that they are Davidic.
4. The apparent impossibility that vs. 18, 19 of Psalm 51 could have been written by David.

*Fifth Step : The Imprecatory Element in the Psalms.*

**The Imprecatory Element in the Psalms.\*** (1) Read Pss. 35 ; 58 ; 59 ; 69 ; 109, and note expressions which seem to have the force of *curses*, and to be uttered in a vindictive spirit. (2) Examine also Ps. 3 : 2, 7 ; 9 : 2-4 ; 18 : 37-43 ; 37 : 12-15 ; 52 : 5-7 ; 63 : 7-11 ; 137 : 7-9. (3) Weigh each of the following considerations, and decide whether individually or collectively they assist in a better comprehension of these passages :† (a) The verbs should be translated as futures, and not as imperatives or optatives, e. g. Ps. 109 : 9, *His children shall be fatherless*, etc., instead of *Let his children be fatherless*, etc. ; but is this grammatically possible? (b) The Old Testament did not teach the duty of loving and forgiving enemies ; a different standard existed ; but see Exod. 23 : 4, 5 ; Prov. 24 : 17, 18 ; 25 : 21, 22 ; Ps. 7 : 4, and story of Joseph in Genesis. (c) These denunciations are personal, and are to be judged as we judge David's great sin ; what objection to this view? (d) After all, this element is very slight, and to be explained as due to the *vehemence of oriental expression*. (e) These expressions are not personal ; David's enemies were God's enemies ; it is because of the insults which God has received that he utters them ; David's feelings against his own enemies are

\* See introduction to various commentaries.

† Taken from Smith's "Bible Dictionary," *Imprecatory Psalms*.

described in Ps. 35 : 12, 13. (f) They are an expression of outraged justice, forbearance having ceased to be a virtue ; they express that feeling common to all ages, that the wicked deserve punishment. Do not many Christians of to-day *pray* that the convicted murderer may not escape hanging? (g) They are intended for dark days, days when the wicked are in power, when resentment becomes "the holiest of instincts."

#### STUDY XVI.—DAVID'S PSALMS—THIRD PERIOD.

- Remarks :** 1. Is there not danger, after all, that we shall expend all our energy in seeking for traces of historical connection between a given Psalm and the events which perhaps furnished the occasion of its origin, and forget what is of greater importance, the great teachings which the Psalm was intended to convey at the time of its writing, and during all time?
2. In carrying out the plan of the "Inductive Bible Studies," those who prepare them find difficulties of various sorts. Not the least among these is that of compressing into the space allotted the material that seems to demand admission. Necessarily *much* must be omitted. Perhaps, as it is, the "studies" have been made too comprehensive. We can only repeat what was said in connection with the third "study."
3. The "studies" are intended for students of all classes. Among those who make use of them there will be differences in natural capacity for work, in opportunities for study. Results will vary according to circumstances. One policy, however, must rule, whatever the circumstances: *Only as much of the work outlined should be undertaken as can be mastered in the time one has to devote to it.* Omit one-half, if necessary three-fourths, but *learn* the remainder.
4. The student has by this time learned that he is expected to do *work for himself*. Is not this, after all, the more satisfactory and profitable method?

##### *First Step : Psalms relating to Absalom's Rebellion.*

Read carefully the Psalms connected with Absalom's rebellion, in the following order : (1) 63, written in the wilderness during the flight before the passage of the Jordan ; (2) 3 ; 4, morning and evening hymns, after passing the Jordan ; (3) 26 ; 62, which perhaps refer to the traitors who deserted him ; (4) 23 ; compare v. 5 with 2 Sam. 17 : 27-29 ; (4) 27 ; 28, during his exile at Mahanaim ; (5) 69 ; 109 (doubtful), which have been thought to refer to Ahithophel's treachery ;—making notes under the following heads :

- 1) Expressions which indicate an eager desire for the privileges of the sanctuary.
- 2) Trust in God, that he will continue to help.
- 3) Assurance that in the end he will be delivered.
- 4) Internal evidence in favor of the Davidic authorship of any or all of these Psalms.

##### *Second Step : Psalm 23, Special expressions, and figures.*

Take up exhaustively Psalm 23, and treat as follows :

1. Read the Psalm and mark every expression which seems to need explanation, and with such helps as are within reach determine its force ; e. g., (v. 1) "*my shepherd*," "*I shall not want*," (v. 2) "*still waters*," better "*waters of refreshment*," (v. 3) "*restoreth my soul*" (cf. 19 : 7), "*paths of righteousness*," "*for his name's sake*," "*valley of the shadow of death*," better "*valley of deep darkness*," "*thy rod and thy staff*," (v. 5) "*preparest a table*" (2 Sam. 17 : 17-29),